



OSPHRANTER ROBUSTUS, Gould.

OSPHRANTER ROBUSTUS, *Gould.*

Black Wallaroo.

HEAD OF A MALE AND OF A FEMALE, LIFE-SIZE.

If there be any one of the Great Kangaroos the discovery of which afforded me more pleasure than another during my sojourn in Australia, it is the Great Black Wallaroo of the mountain-districts of New South Wales. Surprising, indeed, it was that so large and conspicuous an animal had not been previously made known; and still more surprising is the fact that, from the period of my visit in 1838-39 to the present time, 1863, few if any skins of the animal have been sent to Europe. Still I can assure my readers that the existence of the Black Wallaroo is not a myth; for specimens of both sexes grace the collections at the British Museum and at Leyden. Like the *O. antilopinus*, the *O. robustus* becomes dangerous both to man and dogs when the rocky and sterile mountain elevations it frequents are traversed; for, like the *Ibex* of the mountain-ranges of the northern hemisphere, the old males will make a determined stand when assaulted and escape is impossible.

As is the case with the sexes of all the other members of this section of the *Macropodidæ*, the male and female of *O. robustus* differ considerably in size, the latter being much smaller and weaker than the former.

As the districts inhabited by this fine species are fully described in the succeeding pages, it is unnecessary to mention them here.

A glance at the accompanying illustration, which represents a head of each sex of the size of life, will furnish a just conception of the features of these animals.



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Black Wallaroo.

Macropus (Petrogale) robustus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., part viii. p. 92.

Osphranter robustus, Gould, Mon. of Macrop., pl. .—Gray, List of Mamm. in Coll. Brit. Mus., p. 91.

Macropus robustus, Waterh. in Jard. Nat. Lib. *Marsupialia*, p. 241.

Macropus (Halmaturus) robustus, Waterh. Nat. Hist. of Mamm., vol. i. p. 100.

Black Wallaroo of the Colonists.

SINCE my return from Australia in 1840, I have in vain requested my numerous friends and correspondents to procure and transmit examples of this large and truly fine animal. I believe I was the first scientific man who visited the locality in which it dwells, as well as the first who made it known to science; and I may ask, is it not surprising that during the interval of fifteen years which has elapsed since the account of this species was published in my "Monograph of the Kangaroos," no examples besides those I myself brought home should have been procured, and that no attempts to secure living examples of so conspicuous an animal should have been attempted? Indeed, were it not for my visit to its native haunts, it might have remained unknown to us even to the present time. This is the more to be wondered at, since the animal is found within the colony of New South Wales. Surely the exterminating hand of civilized man, so fatal to the animal productions of a new country, cannot have dealt out destruction so unsparingly as to have destroyed the entire race.

The following account of this species appeared in my Monograph of the group, and I regret that I have nothing to add to it.

The Black Wallaroo inhabits the summits of sterile and rocky mountains, seldom descending to the coverts of their sides, and never to their base; few, therefore, have had an opportunity of observing it in a state of nature; indeed there are thousands of persons in Australia who are not even aware of its existence. Although the south-eastern portion of the continent is, I believe, the only part of the country in which it has yet been observed, in all probability it has an extensive range northwards. It is tolerably abundant on the Liverpool Range, and I ascertained that it inhabited many of those hills that branch off on either side of this great mountain-chain, towards the interior as well as towards the coast. Its retreats are so well chosen among the crags and overhanging ledges of rocks, that it is nearly useless to attempt its capture with dogs. It is a formidable and even dangerous animal to approach, for if so closely pressed that it has no other chance of escape, it will rush at and force the invader over the edge of the rocks, as the Ibex is said to do under similar circumstances. Independently of its great muscular power, this animal is rendered still more formidable by the manner in which it makes use of its teeth, biting its antagonist with great severity.

The Black Wallaroo may be regarded as a gregarious animal, four, six, and even more being frequently seen in company. On one of the mountains near Turi, to the eastward of the Liverpool Plains, it was very numerous; and from the nature of this and the other localities in which I observed it, it must possess the power of existing for long periods without water, that element being rarely to be met with in such situations.

The summits of the hills to which this species resorts soon become intersected by numerous roads and well-trodden tracks, caused by its repeatedly traversing from one part to the other; its food consists of grasses and the shoots and leaves of the low scrubby trees which clothe the hills it frequents.

Although much shorter in stature, and consequently less elegant in form, the fully adult male of this species equals in weight the largest specimens of *Macropus major*; and so remarkable is the difference in the colour and size of the sexes, that, had I not seen them together in a state of nature, I should have considered them to be different species, the black and powerful male offering so great a contrast to the small and delicate female.

The male has the fur harsh and somewhat slaggy; general colour slate-grey, obscurely washed with brownish, and tinted with vinous on the outer sides of the thighs; feet dark brown, gradually passing into black on the fore part; upper part of the arm brownish; hands and wrists black; inner surface of the ear white, the exterior brown; muzzle and a patch on the chin blackish; a line round the angle of the mouth

and the lower lip white; throat and fore part of the neck white, the hairs being grey at the base; under surface like the upper, but paler; tail blackish brown above, paler beneath.

The female has the general colour silvery grey, obscurely tinted with purplish or vinous on the back; under surface nearly white; cheeks hoary, with a blackish patch on the chin; tail dirty white, slightly tinged with brown on the upper side; legs paler than the body; hands brown, becoming nearly black on the fingers; toes brownish black above.

	Male.		Female.	
	feet.	inches.	feet.	inches.
Length from the nose to the extremity of the tail	7	0	5	10
„ of the tail	2	10½	2	6
„ „ tarsus and toes, including the nail	1	0	1	10½
„ „ arm and hand, including the nails		13½		9½
„ „ face from the tip of the nose to the base of the ear .		8		7
„ „ ear		3½		3

The accompanying Plates represent the head of the male of the natural size, and whole but greatly reduced figures of both sexes.